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## CHAPTER 1

# THE MILITARY FOUNDATIONS OF THE NGONI KINGDOMS

Across the Ngoni settled in Nyasaland their political system went through three main periods of change and development up to 1939. The first was that of pre-European days, characterized by the military kingdoms. The second was the period of direct British administration, when the chief features of the Ngoni kingdoms were lessen and unrecognized. The third was the period from 1933 onwards when the passing of the Native Authority and Native Courts Ordinances gave recognition to certain traditional forms of the Ngoni political system. Since, in their early forms, from the middle of the nineteenth century onward, the Ngoni kingdoms were founded on conquest, the maintenance of military power both for defence and aggression was an essential condition of their survival. We shall therefore begin the examination of the Ngoni political system with a chapter on their military organization. Most of the Swazi and of trans-Zambezi clans were proud of the part their fathers and grandfathers had played in Ngoni wars. These wars were recalled to the people in the recitals of oral tradition and in the songs and dances which were part of Ngoni culture. Cibamba, who has already been mentioned as the historian of his people, wrote for me in English the following account of Ngoni warfare in the old days, part of which, written in Tumbuka, was used as a reader for the schools in the Livingstonia Mission area. Cibamba had, as a young boy, seen the preparations for war, and had gone more than once as a carrier for his elder brothers who belonged to one of the last formed regiments.

### Ngoni Warfare in Old Days

¶ To the Ngoni war was like work and his boys rejoiced to think of it. When the old men sat in the kraal the talk that roused discussion was of war and their journeyings. All the heroes of the tribe had received their praise-greetings through service in war. In this, ordinary people and slaves came together, for though they might have been unknown to begin with, if they were heroes in one or two wars the whole country knew them. The slaves who showed their courage and strength in war quickly received their freedom and many also had villages of their own because of the people they had captured in war; others obtained the standing of men in authority. Those who were cowards were humiliated and laughed at, and those who had not entered the enemy stockade or killed a man were not allowed to dance in triumph in the kraal but only to join in the Agube dance along with others.

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child behaviour. Five of them appear to suggest values some of which have a place either in Nyakusa or Ngoni ideal personality patterns: self-reliance, obedience, responsibility, sociability, dominance. But there is at least one major difference between the approaches of Professor Wilson and Dr Whiting to the training of children. Professor Wilson is describing the values of Nyakusa adults and their effect on the bringing up of children. Dr Whiting has selected from a series of cultures certain typical or common forms of behaviour which might be displayed by children. These forms of behaviour might represent general social values, but they are not set in the context of any one culture, and the criterion is whether an observer saw a child displaying sociability rather than whether the society desired their children to show sociability and took steps to encourage it. This book was after all a manual to be usable in a number of cultural situations. His emphasis is nevertheless on the observed behaviour of selected children, and illustrates my point made in the early pages of this chapter; whereas Professor Wilson's emphasis was on the adult ideal personality to which, it was hoped, Nyakusa children would conform.

The existence of a 'system' in the upbringing of children, a system set up by a society and under its control, posed a number of questions. Clyde Kluckhohn in several of his books has for a long time provided me with clues in the study of 'systems', and many of these clues are summarized in the chapter on Personality and Culture in his book *Mirror for Man*. Especially in two directions these clues have proved helpful: in his distinction between two kinds of cultural learning, technical and regulatory, or acquiring skills and learning to behave, the latter taking place in the early years of childhood, and acquiring skills in later years; and in his theme of predictability, illustrated in this quotation: 'A definition of socialization in any culture is the predictability of an individual's daily behaviour in various defined situations. . . . When a person behaves most of the

554 563 [847] families. It was, however, demanded from Ngoni children that they should behave in the socially approved manner to everyone, and not only to their Ngoni kin and fellow clansmen. And it was evident in non-Ngoni families that there was often some attempt to teach Ngoni standards of behaviour to their children, but that such attempts broke down when their family system was not organized to enforce the necessary training.

576 577 [847] *The goals of Ngoni child training*

Ngoni adults, and especially the senior men and women who were in control of the training of children and themselves deeply conscious of the traditional values of their society, summed up the aims of the upbringing of children in one word 'respect'. The vernacular term *ulemu*—in the old Ngoni language *klenipe*—is a concept very difficult to translate adequately, certainly to convey its full meaning in a single English word or phrase. The nearest terms are honour and respect, and though in some contexts it is often translated as politeness, that is too limited a term. In fact they had another vernacular term to express courtesy which was to them one way of showing respect. The concept of *ulemu* included the recognition that a particular person or office was entitled to honour; that all behaviour to that person must express respect; and that by showing respect in language, posture and action, a child or adult so behaving, shared in that honour which they were acknowledging. Conversely, through failing to convey respect, a person, whether child [559] or adult, was 'ashamed' and lost face accordingly. I have just said that a particular person was entitled to honour and therefore to respect in the behaviour of others. The Ngoni said that was the origin of the concept, and it was demonstrated in the punctilious observance of etiquette to all chiefs, and to all leading men and women by everyone else. [858] But there was an extension of this concept to include all older people, and Ngoni children were expected to show

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respect to all adults, whether Ngoni or not, whether of their family, or helpers in the household, or former captives. If children did not so behave to old and poor people, they were punished and made to feel ashamed as if they had failed to honour their own relatives. 574 577 958 [967]

A Ngoni elder when speaking of the testimony of early travellers in Nguniland to the good manners found in Ngoni households said: 'Such honouring of each other came to the Ngoni because they liked living together without any scattering as was the custom of other Nyasaland people. . . . . Such honour was not shown by young people for fear of being beaten, but because all children were well taught that this behaviour was right and proper for the upbuilding of the land.' 574 928 929 967

The emphasis in this quotation is clearly on the connexion between personal behaviour and the integrity and prosperity of the Ngoni kingdom. When Ngoni elders were talking about child training and its effect on the future of the Ngoni people, they made constant reference to 'those who spoil the land'. The phrase was the same as taking the roof off a hut, i.e. destroying it for the purpose for which it was built. This determined emphasis on behaviour illustrated the Ngoni intention of regulating personal contacts within their society, so that harmonious relations would build up the society which quarrels and factions would destroy, and indeed had partly destroyed in some of the historic secessions from the kingdom. Harmonious personal relations are perhaps the covert if not the overt aim of all human societies from the individual family outwards. We see this however in sharp outline in Ngoni life, partly because they were acutely aware of the vulnerability from external influences of their society and way of living. 929

Two very ancient folk-tales illustrate Ngoni thinking about keeping their kingdom and society intact and maintaining their code of polite behaviour. 539 929

The first was taken down by me from a very old man who [115]

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# VII

# The Threshold of Adulthood (II)

### *Knowledge and skills*

§67 §68 Towards the end of the last chapter we said that in this following chapter we would be concerned with the knowledge and skills which young adults in Ngoni society needed before they could assume the adult role of setting up and managing a new home, and of taking part in village and national affairs. Here and there in earlier chapters there have been references to 'men's affairs' and the 'world of women', suggesting that there was a range of knowledge, of activities and of competence in these activities for which preparation and training was needed for those on the threshold of adulthood.

In talking with the Ngoni about the way in which they were handing on their traditional knowledge to the younger generations, they often distinguished between two kinds of knowledge: one a wide range of perceptions and information necessary to carry out daily and occasional activities in the household and village; and the other, a corpus of traditional lore about natural phenomena, and about their history and law. This is not altogether a valid distinction since both kinds of knowledge were traditional but it is a convenient way of approaching the two kinds of instruction given to young adults. The Ngoni were often apt to stress the importance of this second kind of knowledge because they resented the attitude of many Europeans that the Ngoni, and other African peoples, were 'ignorant' until the schools came. This touched them on a very sore point since they set great store on knowledge and wisdom in men and women, and did

§67 [186]

● [571]

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in judgement on his own son, a young man of twenty-one, for committing adultery with the wife of a man of a former slave family. The husband brought the case against the chief's son, and the chief ordered the man to speak truly and not be afraid. The case was heard amid the most deathly silence. In awarding a heavy penalty of compensation against his son, the chief spoke of the central position of law in Ngoni life, and of the fact, so sharply brought out by the case, that the law was no respecter of persons.

Young adults, boys and girls, were held personally responsible for breaches of the law which they had committed. Penalties were awarded against them as individuals, even though they often could not pay the compensation without the help of their father and his family. They were expected to become acquainted with the law in various ways. One was by conformity to accepted social codes of behaviour, instilled into them by their elders, particularly in such matters as sex relations, respect for property, avoidance of slander and of injury by violence. Another way of learning how the law operated, as well as the principles upon which the case-law was built, was by attending the courts, and listening carefully to the cross-examinations as well as to the judgements. Young people were expected also to ask their fathers, and elders generally, about points of law which they had not understood, or had confused with some of the practices of the local people. The onus was upon young adults for acquiring this knowledge of the law as well as for behaving in accordance with it. We shall see in the next chapter how the Ngoni regarded being law-abiding as one of their basic cultural traits, as well as being evidence of the individual character of a young adult.

### *Ngoni traditional skills*

We made a distinction, albeit a rather tentative one, at the beginning of this chapter between certain kinds of traditional knowledge which we have been describing up to this

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Maize, the Ngoni staple cereal which had replaced the 251
tall millet they had formerly preferred, was stored on the [262]
ash in the grain stores which were described in Chapter IV.
Women whose husbands could afford to hire labour to work [556]
their fields often had three or four large grain stores, and
their presence in the compound conferred importance on
their owners. Inside the hut were earthenware jars of [405]
beans, cowpeas, bulrush millet, clarified fat and butter,
dried chillies, while from the rafters hung bunches of herbs
and dried green spinach. Some of the jars were polished a [323]
shining black, others had a blue or green glaze on them. It
was a Ngoni girl's ambition to go to her new home when 583
married with a good array of storage pots, baskets, mats, 577
spoons, stirring sticks, and a wooden meat-dish. This would
show her in-laws that she was industrious and intended to
have a high standard of household management in her new
home.

### *Varieties of food and their preparation*

Ngoni women prided themselves on feeding their households 511
well, both in variety, quantity and quality. Although they 577
could rely on helpers to work in the gardens and to do some
of the preparing of food before cooking, they always managed [357]
their own supplies and provided a variety of menus, and show-
ed that they could cook well themselves and instruct others.

Ngoni girls clustered round the fire when a special dish 252
was being prepared. They watched every movement of their 868
mother as she lifted one pot off the fire and put another on,
measured out water in a spoon to add to the sauce, stirred
the maize porridge strongly and evenly to get rid of lumps
and bubbles, washed each stirring stick in a pot of water
before using it again.

There was variety in the dishes served from day to day 262
in big Ngoni households, usually in the form of a main dish
of cereal with side dishes of broth and vegetables and less
often of meat or chicken. The main dish was served in the [415]

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829 individuals upon the cohesion of that society through their behaviour and actions. This was illustrated in the phrase so constantly used by them, and referred to already several times: 'He is spoiling the land,' or the converse, quoted in Chapter I: 'Young people were well taught that this behaviour was right for the upbuilding of the land.'

181 829 Among these so-called group values the first of all, and pre-eminent above all, was the value of keeping together. Taught by bitter experience that personal quarrels could lead to political secessions and to the diminution of the power and influence of the Ngoni kingdoms, the focus of much of their thinking was on maintaining cohesion whether in small units or in large. I think the Ngoni were the only people in Nyasaland where individuals and families were not allowed to leave the villages to live elsewhere without permission of the chief or headman. In the local courts there were frequent cases in which the accused had been guilty of leaving without permission. This illustration could be used also to indicate the second of the group values. I have called it dominance for want of a better term. It involves the exercise of authority, political and legal, over their own and subject peoples, the determination to exact obedience, influenced by a feeling of paternal responsibility for all over whom authority was claimed. This was an ambivalent sentiment affecting the attitude of the ruler and his relations with the ruled, and was the basis of the court case quoted in Chapter VI, when a chief made a judgement against his own son for adultery with a poor man's wife. The third group value was that of mutual aid and trust within the in-group, in order to secure its cohesion. This was the integrating principle of the 'house' system, described briefly in Chapter I and mentioned in many other contexts. Mutual trust and aid had been in the past the main element in the behaviour of men in their own regiments, in the mutual relation of warrior with warrior, both when on campaign and when living together in the villages.

181 577 The four personal values were inherent in the acceptance

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and demonstration of the group values. The first two, physical and moral strength, and working hard and persistently at allotted tasks, were, as we have seen, instilled into children from the stage of second teeth onward. The second two, dignity and wisdom, were to a large extent values implicit in adult life, and in the case of wisdom seen specially in the contribution made by senior men and women to community life. Dignity, however, had an ambivalent meaning, as did dominance among the group values. It covered not only language, deportment, self-control, accepted rank and precedence within the hierarchy on all social occasions, but the more subtle and very typical Ngoni attitude towards 'losing face'. In the sense that young adults and even older children hated being rebuked in public because it made them lose face, it belonged to younger people as well as to older, to those called the 'humble ones' as well as to the 'great ones'.

All the emphases in child training on language, deportment, self-control, manners and inter-personal behaviour of all kinds were related to the value of human dignity, and to the concept of a person's 'human nature' as being something to be respected and built up, and carefully guarded, since it was very vulnerable.

At the end of Chapter II when some Ngoni values were mentioned, wisdom was contrasted with cleverness, and equated with knowledge, good judgement, ability to control others and keep the peace, and skill in the use of speech. The young Ngoni headmaster in the first village described in Chapter I said reflectively one evening, after listening to some of the elders talking with me about Ngoni values, 'Yes, we are different in our generation. We are proud, but they had wisdom.' It was an acknowledgement of the pretensions which his generation had begun to claim as a result of the new knowledge in the schools. It was also a recognition that the accumulated wisdom of the generations of his father and grandfather had in it an understanding of values which the younger generation had not yet acquired.

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191 The four so-called personal values will be reflected in the
577 Ngoni personality traits which we are going on to discuss.
528 There are however two values which did not appear to fit
into any integrated system, and which yet recurred, as
[192] themes in Ngoni culture, and here and there in the ideas
inherent in child training. One was the theme of childhood
innocence, which was much deeper and more subtle than
merely keeping children in ignorance of sexual life and inter-
course. The other was the value set on the 'gentle' man. He
was a man who appeared to be almost wholly self-controlled,
able to have normal sexual intercourse with his wives but
not always thinking about women, showing firmness but
without anger, being just but also merciful. These were the
qualities looked for in the man responsible for the guardian-
ship of certain head villages where the ancestor cult was
[769] carried on, and who was entrusted with the ritual associated
[774] with the ancestor cult. In the more ancient ritual, such as
carrying the sacred emblem before the armies, it was young
boys, exemplifying the childhood innocence theme, who
were entrusted with this charge. In the more modern con-
[795] texts, many of the outstanding Ngoni ministers in the church
were recognized and revered as 'gentle' men.

### *The Ngoni ideal personality*

577 Chapters IV and V, as well as Chapters VI and VII, showed
that there were certain elements in the Ngoni ideal of what
their children should be like which were common to young
men and women, to boys and girls, while others were empha-
sized only for girls or for boys. Among the common traits we
have already seen the outstanding emphasis on 'respect' in
all forms of behaviour and in all kinds of contact with older
people, and with others who should be 'honoured'. Part of
this respect was shown in obedience, and with this obedience
in all the detailed inter-personal relations with senior people
was associated, in the individual's relations to society as a
whole, being law-abiding and complying with Ngoni law.

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As we saw in Chapter VII ignorance of the law was no excuse for breaking the law, and the positive virtue of being law-abiding was constantly emphasized in families, villages and in the kingdom generally. Inherent in showing respect and being obedient and law-abiding was the much stressed quality of self-control. Early travellers remarked on the restrained, dignified and courteous behaviour in Ngoni villages, which was my experience also, and especially in the vicinity of leading Ngoni families. This kind of self-control was taught as we have seen in a great variety of contexts, from avoiding greedy and noisy eating as young children to putting up with being ordered about in the boys' dormitory, and from the insistence on the decorous forms of greeting and thanks to the suppression of any overt fear or pain at the puberty ceremonies.

Two other qualities were emphasized in child training since they were expected of all Ngoni people in inter-personal relations. One was generosity in sharing anything that a person had. It was a quality demanded of everyone, from the small child who was made to uncrouch his fist in which he was hiding three ground-nuts and give two of them to his fellows, to the big chief whose duty at a feast was to see that everyone had enough and to send food from his own portion to anyone who looked hungry. A number of proverbs called attention to the value of generosity and to the social attitude towards meanness, which was felt to be despicable. 'If you do not play with other people the grass will grow round your hut' implied that isolation and social ostracism would be the retaliation to a mean man. The reciprocal element in generosity was always implicit in the teaching and the practice and was illustrated in the proverb, often said hopefully by visitors when hospitality was not very readily forthcoming: 'I have sent my food basket to someone; the basket will return to me.'

The other quality was the conventional display of sympathy, especially at times of mourning for the dead, but also on occasions of severe loss, such as cattle dying, or illness or

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attitude. These visits and expressions of sympathy could not be omitted without great social disapproval. If a young man or woman was absent from the village at the time of death or loss, their first duty on returning was to go and express sympathy with the sufferer. To assist in these condolences so that the speaker and the hearer would readily understand each other, proverbs were used such as: 'If the pot is broken it is broken indeed,' and, 'when water is poured out it cannot be gathered up.' The Ngoni disliked the noisy and unrestrained forms of mourning which they saw among the people round them. To them the quiet visit and the note of resignation in the proverbs used fully conveyed the sympathy they wished to express.

All through the later stages of training children and young adults the importance of speaking well was emphasized. This at first referred to correct language and being audible but not noisy. Later, as we saw in Chapter VII, the art of speech was held up as a Ngoni characteristic, and many proverbs brought this out in ordinary conversation as well as on more formal occasions such as giving evidence in the courts. When a group of people, generally women, kept up a continuous meaningless chatter, onlookers, generally men, shrugged their shoulders and said, 'They are preparing meat without salt.' When a person talked on and on about a matter which was being discussed without getting to the point, impatient listeners, or the councillor in the law courts said: 'Your wisdom is like mushrooms which come after the cooking is finished,' or, more scathingly, 'You are the feet of a centipede' which wander aimlessly with many steps but no direction. Proverbs were not always a form of rebuke; they could also be a commendation. When a person brought out clearly the point of an argument the listeners said, 'You have rung a little bell'; and when after a prolonged discussion or the hearing of a case in the courts the audience accepted a decision as conclusive and just, they said, 'The upper and the lower teeth meet together.'

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## PERSONALITY AND CHARACTER

When the Ngoni talked about the separate ideal personalities of men and women, they emphasized the training needed for younger men, and to some extent also for younger women. Senior men and women were expected to possess special qualities due to their age and status and experience. It was recognized that the limited responsibilities of young men before marriage gave them little authority in village and family affairs. Since each family however was bringing up its girls to leave them on marriage and to take the good name of the family elsewhere, there was less distinction made between the qualities desired in younger married women and older ones than there was between the two groups of men.

### *The ideal personality of Ngoni women*

This had four main aspects: physical capacity and appearance, relationship to her husband and his relatives, competence in household management, and general reputation for justice and wisdom.

We talked in Chapter III about the connexion in Ngoni thinking between women being healthy and strong and being able to bear healthy children. In the marriage negotiations and even at the final ceremony itself in the bridegroom's village, there were formalized standard questions put by the bridegroom's representatives about the health of the girl and her family, and these were replied to also in conventional phrases. Such inquiries about health had been made secretly long before the final ceremony, and indeed before any formal approaches had been made which led to the betrothal. But the fact that they were made in public on two distinct occasions, at the preliminary visit of the man's representatives and at the marriage itself, underlined the importance of health and its relation to child-bearing capacity in the ideal Ngoni woman.

We saw in the last chapter that physical strength for continuous hard manual work in the household and in the

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827 577 gardens was not required of most Ngoni women, though they were expected to know by experience how to hoe and to pound, to mud walls and to clean a house in order to supervise their helpers and to see that household work was done efficiently.

577 581 [826] In addition to being healthy, the ideal Ngoni woman was always well-groomed. She might lack the facial formation of high cheek-bones, narrow nose and deep-set eyes and the light bronze colouring which were the accepted standards of beauty. Even without these natural, usually inherited, advantages she spent, as we have seen, much time every day [302] taking care of her skin and hair. When she was receiving visitors or sitting outside her hut, her two long cloths, one [291] fastened under the armpits and the other over one shoulder and knotted on the chest, were carefully draped and arranged. If she walked to another compound or out of the village on the road, or walked or danced in any ceremony, [516] her dignity of bearing and poise of head was always marked. She did not hurry, but, as the Ngoni said, 'she walked strongly'. A government official passing an octogenarian [481] Ngoni princess on the road stopped and offered her a lift in his car. She looked him up and down and said: 'Thank you, young man. I can still walk.'

577 602 Many references have been made already to the relationship between a wife and her husband, and between a wife, especially a young one, and her husband's relatives. The keynotes of this relationship were devotion to her husband, respect for his relatives, and circumspection in her relations with her co-wives and with her non-Ngoni helpers. Jealousy between co-wives was recognised by the Ngoni but not condoned, and the young wife at marriage was warned by her own family against quarrelling with anyone, co-wives, helpers or in-laws, though the last was almost unthinkable.

577 592 Competence in household management, being a successful 'châtelaine', made many demands on a Ngoni woman if she were to live up to what was considered an ideal house

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wife. We have talked in Chapters IV and VII of her duties in organizing food supplies, supervising cooking, and that supreme test of competence: dividing out the food so that all had a fair share. The same high standard of skill was expected in the general care and supervision of the compound, the children and the household staff. Ngoni women, like their menfolk, were proud of being able to supervise other people and organize life around them, to control others satisfactorily, to hear complaints and to pacify quarrels. The proverb 'The tooth laughs to no purpose', meaning that angry people show their teeth but with no merriment, was often heard when Ngoni women intervened to stop two quarrelling girls or to prevent an irate helper getting angry with the nurse girls.

The traits of justice and wisdom were important elements in the foundation of a Ngoni married woman's reputation. These were judged by her ability to allocate fair shares of food to servants and helpers, and to adjudicate wisely in women's disputes. Two proverbs referred particularly to dividing out food and were said about women who were either careless or stingy, and did not give their helpers a fair share. 'The finger-nails are surfeited' meant that the important people had eaten heartily without thought for others; and 'She has sliced one side only' had the same connotation, that those who had the supplies were keeping too much for themselves. Two other proverbs drove home this principle of *noblesse oblige* when emphasizing the responsibilities of married women: 'The elephant is not made heavy by its trunk,' and 'If the cows do not produce milk the herdsman is responsible.'

### *The ideal personality of Ngoni men*

As we have just said, there was a definite personality pattern for young men whether married or not, which emphasized special qualities looked for in them, since on the whole they had relatively little authority or responsibility in village

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577 affairs. Boys and young men were expected to be physically
562 strong, and tough in the sense of being able to do hard tasks,
561 walk long distances, dance for hours on end, and put up
[827] with hardships without grumbling. The senior men, as we saw earlier in this chapter hated to see idleness and set great store by young men working hard and persistently at any tasks undertaken. Several proverbs illustrated this quality
[538] and were used with effect when boys were found hanging round in the village doing nothing: 'Loitering eats the owner,' 'Laziness is eating dung,' 'The garden will not be tilled if you stop hoeing it.'

577 Other qualities desired in young men were all connected
829 with the values of staying together as a family and as a village group, and of fostering mutual aid and trust within the groups of males in the dormitory and in the 'house'. It was believed that they ought to be acutely sensitive to the opinion of their contemporaries, a lesson which they learned from early days in the dormitory. To an insensitive person, showing intolerance and hard-heartedness they said: 'Were you made with dog's bones?' for dogs' bones were thought
[538] to be hard and unfeeling; or, 'You have a heart like a crocodile.' A fear of social ostracism was fostered all the time and expressed in the proverb: 'The bird eats in his own field.'

577 There were innumerable proverbs about willingness to
829 co-operate in all the necessary tasks which fell to the young
538 men, such as communal hoeing described in Chapter VII, or digging the grave at a funeral. 'The eyes for seeing,' 'One arm cannot crush a louse,' 'A river grows by its little streams,' 'The heifer grows by giving it more food'—these and many others were used to admonish those who held back and to encourage those who joined in willingly. Other proverbs warned against promises of help which were not kept. 'You will eat those of the axe but not those of the hoe' was said to someone who had counted on noisy assertions of forthcoming help, like the sounds made by the chopping of an axe, and not in quiet persistent help, like the smooth almost silent

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action of the hoe. 'They are our kin according to their eyes' was said as a reminder of misplaced trust in those who appeared to be helpful but were not really.

Readiness to take advice both from their age-mates and from older men was another quality held to be desirable in young men. Proverbs illustrating this were: 'He that refuses instruction will be surprised by blood,' and 'He remembers that he fell; he forgot that he was hurt.' As often with proverbs, there were others with a contrary emphasis which were sometimes used as a retort to the former ones, or in self-defence. 'The inheritance was eaten by those worthy of it' was intended as a rejoinder not to interfere in other people's affairs, when unwanted advice was offered. 'The body is felt by its owner' was sometimes said to encourage a man to stick to his own opinion. On the other hand a too abrupt rejoinder, especially to an older person, was regarded as discourteous, and onlookers said 'You cause the spittle to be dry' to express extreme disapproval.

*Ngoni personality in a changing culture*

The direction of the training of boys had been formerly towards military life, and towards the qualities which made effective fighting men, and emphasized loyalty to leaders and camaraderie in the regiments. This emphasis on military preparedness was however never the sole emphasis in Ngoni training, and hence when warfare came to an end, there remained traditional spheres of influence and activity which were an integral part of life in the Ngoni kingdoms, as well as new spheres of activity opened up by missions, the administration, the trading companies and the labour recruiters.

The traditional forms of activity were found in Ngoni local government which included the chief's administration and the courts of law; family and village affairs including the building up of herds and buying and selling cattle; and ritual life. The new kinds of activity included occupations such as teacher, minister, clerk, store assistant, houseboy,

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tion. In all the selection of individuals to 'enter the place' of an important person who had died, the new holder of the place had to measure up to Ngoni personality standards and be acknowledged as a 'good character'.

The new kinds of occupation open to Ngoni men as a result of education in the mission schools were of two main types: those where the holders of the job still lived in the Ngoni kingdom and carried on their work in the setting of a Ngoni village; and those which involved leaving the village and living and working outside Ngoniland, more or less out of sight and out of control of Ngoni elders.

Some of the mission teachers, ministers, and evangelists returned to live in Ngoni villages after they had completed their training, though others of course were posted elsewhere. In one of the villages described in Chapter I there had been in the early days of mission work fierce and continuous opposition to the opening of schools, as well as to the preaching of Christianity. I mentioned the old evangelist who had been threatened with death by the chief when he first took up his work. If he had left under those threats he would have lost out for ever among his people, for he would have been called a coward. He stayed, cultivated his land, grew his own food, was a great hunter, was respectful to the chief and elders, brought up his children to respect Ngoni traditions. He gradually gained the reputation of being brave, a 'gentle' man, a powerful and fluent speaker in the church on Sundays, a man of wisdom and judgement, and he was constantly asked for his opinion on village affairs. Most of the village, Christian and non-Christian alike, went to the church service on Sundays, sang the Ngoni hymns, listened to his sermons in the Ngoni language, sprinkled with Ngoni proverbs and illustrated by episodes from Ngoni life and history. Very few people in that village over twenty-five years old were Christians, but the leading Ngoni families allowed him to baptize younger and older children and to instruct them in Sunday-school. The Ngoni elders contributed to the

3: Read E-5 (1935-1939) 1960
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position. They wanted them to be, or to become, senior clerks, trusted store assistants, valued houseboys, foremen in charge of other men, hospital assistants. They wanted them, in other words, to be in positions where Ngoni traits would be appreciated, and where good behaviour and self-control, ability to supervise others, responsibility and initiative, obedience to orders, would be recognized and rewarded.

In conclusion here is a record of a conversation I heard in the village of a very senior chief, so senior that he was given the title of *Inkosi* when his subjects addressed him. The chief, who was then in his seventies, but active and vigorous, was sitting in a chair on the veranda of his hut, out of the sun's glare, with several of the senior men of the village behind him. Two young teachers in charge of a school came to greet him. They bent one knee as they squatted in front of him, as they had been taught to do as children, gave him the customary greeting, and waited in silence till he spoke.

'How is your school?'

'The classes are full and the children are learning well, *Inkosi*.'

'How do they behave?'

'Like Ngoni children, *Inkosi*.'

'What do they learn?'

'They learn reading, writing and arithmetic, scripture and geography and drill.'

'Is that education?'

'It is education, *Inkosi*.'

'No! No! Education is *very* broad, *very* deep. It is not only in books, it is learning to live. I am an old man. When I was a boy I went with the army to the Bemba war. Then the mission came and I went to school. I became a teacher. Then I was a chief. I have seen this country change, and now the young men go away to work. I tell you Ngoni children must learn how to live, and how to work and earn money, and how to build up our land. *Uyezwa na?*' (Do you hear?)

'*Yebo Inkosi.*' (Yes, O chief.)

3: Read E-5 (1935-1939) 1960
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parents and the community, the children and the community, and the community and the school. There are a number of clues to follow in examining the different groups of people involved in a child's growing up, and discovering some kind of consistent pattern of relationship between them. The clues are not difficult to trace for they begin in such information as the amount of time a child spends with each group, what he learns from each group, how much authority and responsibility the group assumes for him, and so on. In this analysis it is not enough to relate each group to the children. It is important too to be aware of the personal relations between parents, relatives, community, school authorities, in terms of their opportunities for mutual contact and discussion, and their attitude towards culture change and cultural conservation. Out of such potential contacts arise the formulation of aims for home and school training, and their harmony or their conflict, and the resultant effects on the growing up of a child.

These two lines to be followed up, which we have just indicated, are familiar to most teachers and to many parents. The third line arising out of this study, and common to most other studies of growing up, is related to research on personality and culture and on national character. This field of studies is more controversial and more complex than the former. In the case of the Ngoni they had a more or less distinct ideal personality rooted in their culture and answering the question: what kind of people are the Ngoni and how do they want others to regard them? This ideal personality was the goal of their child-training as described in this book, but it was in the process of being modified by school teaching, by Christian teaching, and perhaps more profoundly still by the growth of Nyasaland African nationalism. The sharp outlines of the ideal personality type of Ngoni men and women were already blurred by these political and educational developments.

For readers of this book the relevance of this aspect of

4: Barnes E-5 (1946-1949)1951 FR5 Ngoni FR5
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833 Sexual intercourse is the critical activity of marriage. Within the marriage bond it is not merely permitted, it is right and proper and positively sanctioned. All intercourse is dangerous, whether marital or not, and indeed it is perhaps the licit social significance of marital intercourse that leads to the attribution of mystical 843 significance. While a woman is pregnant, her husband can and indeed should sleep with her and with her co-wives, for it is not her husband's mere copulation with others that endangers her child, but frivolous and illicit intercourse with the wife of another or with some woman he has no intention of marrying. The moral code supports the social order, and the infant is born live into a righteous and well-regulated family. Otherwise it will not be born, or be born dead. Thus runs the belief.

*5. Christian marriage*

794 We have noted that, whatever were the intentions of the framers of 581 the 1903 Regulations, Christian marriage ceremonies do not now have any legal significance, either in the Administration's courts or in the Native Courts. They are, however, significant in the eyes of the missions concerned, and sanctions are employed to ensure that all Christians are married in church. Marriages usually take place at the mission itself and there is some sort of preparation beforehand to verify that the couple concerned are aware of the religious implications of the marriage. Important people are sometimes married in a village church and the ceremony is attended by many people. These rites, both at the mission and in the village, involve the local groups of Christians and serve to integrate the members. The barriers against marriage outside the sectarian group might under some conditions lead to Christian or even sectarian endogamy but among the Ngoni this has not taken place. If a couple are anxious to marry and cannot by reason of a religious disparity, the pagan will usually join the church and then proceed to marriage as soon as the rules of the denomination permit. After marriage, a number then cease active participation in the affairs of the church, although they usually continue to regard themselves and are regarded as Christians. The fairly rapid growth of Christianity in the last fifty years makes it impossible to tell as yet whether an endogamous community will be formed. In any case, the Christian community stretches like the rest of Ngoni society to the Copperbelt and the towns of Southern Rhodesia, and there are facilities for Christian labour migrants who wish to marry Christian girls in the towns.

799 The missions have attacked polygyny, the inheritance of widows, the ceremony of 'taking up the child', belief in *mdulo* and pre-marital [597] copulation. In addition, the Dutch Reformed Church Mission has opposed the drinking of beer, and in theory but not as yet in practice, payment of bridewealth. The prohibition on the drinking of beer has led to the exchange of gifts of cooked food between the two sides in the various ceremonies of marriage, without making any important difference to their content and meaning. The missions have had